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ABSTRACT

Turn-taking in language classroom discourse is analyzed in order to discover patterns of instructional teacher-pupil exchange. It is concluded that traditional modes of second language instruction (especially in English as a second language) tend to stifle student initiative. Since students rarely have the opportunity to open an exchange, it is thought that they are being hampered in developing interactive skills that will be needed in everyday situations. To remedy this problem, the following changes are recommended: (1) textbook dialogs should be less one-sided; (2) authentic materials should be used, especially for comprehension; and (3) the role of the teacher should be changed to that of a major learning aid in an essentially self-directed program. A model for analysis of classroom discourse is included. (JB)

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M.-J. GREMMO, H. HOLEC, P. RILEY

TAKING THE INITIATIVE : SOME PEDAGOGICAL APPLICATIONS OF DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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RESUME

Depuis le début des années 70, un nombre croissant de descriptions se trouvent fondées non pas sur des analyses linguistiques strictes, c'est-à-dire sur des analyses du fonctionnement interne des codes verbaux, mais sur des analyses de la communication verbale qui prennent en compte les circonstances dans lesquelles les codes verbaux sont utilisés. Le poblème que cette orientation nouvelle pose aux enseignants de langue est celui de l'utilité de ces descriptions.

Dans cet article, nous nous proposons de montrer quelles sont les implications et les applications pédagogiques immédiates d'une description de ce type nouveau, la description de l'interaction verbale dans les échanges communicatifs directs.

Après un bref rappel de ce que nous entendons par interaction verbale et une présentation de la description que nous en donnons dans l'état actuel de nos recherches, nous appliquons notre modèle descriptif à un extrait d'interaction dans une classe de langue pour montrer comment il est possible grâce à ce modèle, de définir les caractéristiques spécifiques de l'interaction de type pédagogique et de déterminer ainsi si ce type d'interaction favorise ou non l'acquisition d'une compétence de communication satisfaisante.

La même opération est ensuite reproduite sur un dialogue tiré d'une méthode audio-orale.

Dans les deux cas, on constate que l'interaction présentée aux apprenants est préjudiciable à l'acquisition de la compétence à prendre l'initiative verbale.

Nous en tirons un certain nombre de conclusions pédagogiques et suggérons quelques-unes des modifications qu'il serait bon d'apporter au comportement de l'enseignant en classe de langue.

Since the publication of de Saussure's *Cours*, the science of linguistics has been justifiably proud of its autonomy. This independence from the intellectual and methodological constraints of other disciplines was essential if the peculiar characteristics of language were to be described on their own terms. Consequently, considerable progress was made in those areas where it is possible to isolate the objects of linguistic study from their extra-linguistic context : phonology, morphology and syntax. In general, our understanding of the workings of the verbal component in human communication has benefited greatly from this narrowly-focused approach.

However, independence can all too easily foster isolationist tendencies and for much of this century linguists tried to keep their subject in quarantine to prevent contagion from the outside world. The limitations of this approach have become increasingly apparent. Pushed — where not actually led — by workers in other fields, linguists have been obliged to turn their attention to an extremely wide range of studies in which language impinges directly on the central object of investigation, thus giving rise to a large number of hybrid applications — psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, neurolinguistics, ethnolinguistics and so on. More recently, there have been several attempts to assimilate these activities into a broader conception of language study : pragmalinguistics, discourse analysis and a tendency to talk of " the linguistic sciences ", all bear witness to the growing interest in *non-autonomous linguistics*. Under this heading come a number of exciting and interesting developments in fields as disparate as semiotics, philosophy, language acquisition, non-verbal communication, illocutionary theory, the analysis of interaction and the study of social roles.

All this is well and good, but for the poor language teacher sweating away at the coal face there is often the strong suspicion that such studies are more and more irrelevant to his needs. This situation is only aggravated by the tendency for new developments in linguistics to be applied — or rather " marketed " — in faddish, strident ways : transformational grammar, language laboratories, suggestopaedia, audio-visual, global, functional — each is greeted as a panacea only to be dismissed, a few years and a lot of money later, as an *ignis fatuus*.

This is one of a number of articles in which we have tried to show that, on the contrary, research work in non-autonomous linguistics *is* relevant to language teaching, and in an immediate, fundamental and detailed way. Earlier articles have considered applications of our own research to the evaluation of audio-visual teaching materials (Holec, 1975), to problems in communicative language teaching (Riley, 1977), to the study of the teacher's role (Gremmo, Holec and Riley, 1977) and to contrastive analysis (Riley, forthcoming).

In this article we will be considering some of the pedagogical implications of our work on the analysis of face-to-face interaction. We will first outline some aspects of that work briefly and we will then try to show that what might at first sight seem to be abstract or irrelevant can in fact be useful to the educationist studying the language of the classroom and to the teacher interested in improving his understanding of language-teaching techniques.

I. - OUTLINE OF A MODEL FOR THE DESCRIPTION OF FACE-TO-FACE INTERACTION

Since human communicative behaviour is a vastly complex phenomenon, it is both possible and necessary to describe it from many different points of view : the psychologist, the sociologist, the philosopher, the anthropologist, all contribute to the overall picture. Our own contribution is sociolinguistic : what interests us are the rules which govern the linguistic aspects of interactive behaviour in a given community. We are concerned with identifying those behavioural rules and describing their operations ; we are not concerned with making value-judgements about them, nor with making explicit the motivations underlying particular examples of behaviour — because as linguists we are not competent to do so.

1. INTERACTION

In this article then we will be using the term *interaction* in a restricted sense to refer to one particular aspect of communicative behaviour. By interaction we mean the set of actions and reactions which are realised by *turns* (" taking the floor "), i.e. the give-and-take which characterises this type of oral communication. It follows that this particular aspect, this particular definition, of interaction could never be applied to the analysis of written discourse, as is the case with certain other approaches to discourse analysis. (Cf. Coulthard, 1977). It also follows that we distinguish between interaction and *illocution*, or the study of " speech-acts " which are generally described in terms of the individual's communicative intentions : interactive structure and illocutionary structure are two related but distinct strands in the complex tapestry of human communicative behaviour. (Riley, 1976).

2. ALTERNATION

Interaction, then, is a product of communicative collaboration, and its minimal unit is, therefore, the *exchange*. Interactive acts (i.e. turns) are mutually defining, since they derive their function from their relative position in context : to discuss the interactive value of a decontextualised utterance is about as profitable as asking " what is the sound of one hand clapping ? "

Alternation, therefore, is the defining characteristic of interaction : whatever the relative length or frequency of individual contributions, and whether they are verbal or non-verbal, there must be this " floor-sharing ", if interaction, in our sense of the word, can be said to occur. The specific nature of that alternation, — how and when the participants in a given interaction will go about floor-sharing, — is regulated by a number of socio-cultural conventions. These conventions stipulate, for example, who has the right to take the floor, and when, who has the right to interrupt, who has the right to terminate the exchange, and so on. In much of Europe, relative superiority, in terms of social status, age, sex, etc. confers the right to first turn. Another example is the right of parents and teachers to " have the last word " in their dealings with children.

3. ADDRESS

Participants regulate their interaction by *address* i.e. the transition in real time from one turn to another. The rules of address decide whose turn it is, and whose turn it will be next — who speaks when. The rules of address for certain types of interaction can be roughly summarised as follows :

(i) The first speaker chooses which participant(s) will have the 2nd, 4th, 6th, etc. turns.

(ii) The 3rd, 5th, 7th, etc. turns must be performed by the first speaker.

What this gives us, in terms of a sequence of turns in an exchange, is the following :

First turn : a participant X takes the floor and chooses his successor(s) : Y (Z)

Second turn : the successor chosen takes his turn and then gives back the floor to X

Third turn : - either X takes the floor and then chooses his successor again, but giving priority in order, to

(i) Y.

(ii) other successors, Z, who were chosen in the first turn but who have not yet had their turn.

(iii) any other participant.

- or he does not choose a successor.

Fourth turn : - either the successor chosen by X in the third turn now takes the floor and then gives it back to X

- or, if no successor was chosen, any participant may take the floor and perform a *first turn*, thus restarting the process.

The timing of turns is determined by the turn-taking signals emitted by the participants (Kendon, 1967 - Duncan, 1972).

4. INTERACTIVE ROLES

Participants in a face-to-face exchange enact a number of interactive roles, which can be described in terms of functions (rights and duties) and acts (the " moves " discussed in Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975). Interactive roles must be carefully distinguished from social roles (cf. Gremmo, Holec and Riley, 1977) : they define the nature of the individual's participation in a given exchange. In general terms, three or four such roles are available to participants and they can be characterised as follows :

(i) The role of *Speaker* (S)

The Speaker initiates and closes the minimal limit of interactive structure, the exchange.

(ii) The role of *Addressee* (A)

This role consists in the acceptance of the turn-taking constraints imposed by S.

(iii) The role of *Listener* (L)

At first glance, this might seem to be a purely negative role, since it consists in participating in an interaction without taking the floor, but of course any L is a potential A or S. Then again, it is perfectly possible for an L to *interrupt* (i.e. to take the floor out-of-turn, not to anticipate one's turn.) Thirdly, Listeners have an indirect influence on the interaction via the continual stream of information which they communicate to S and A (approval, impatience, boredom, etc.) verbally or non-verbally.

(iv) The role of *Director of the Interaction* (D)

In certain contexts and situations, (comittee meetings, debates, seminars, etc.) rights to the floor are distributed by a given individual (" Chairman ", " President ", " Speaker ", etc.) who opens and closes the interaction as a whole and who, very often, nominates the Speaker for transactions (the unit of structure intermediate between interaction and exchange, see below).

Participants in an interaction enact their roles by performing *acts*, i.e. particular types of turn. There are four basic types of interactive act : Opening (O), Closing (C), Reply (R) and Termination (T). These acts combine to form interactive structures :

(a) Minimal element of structure : the Exchange

O + nR + (C) *

The end of an exchange is signalled by a C, (that is a turn in which no successor or Addressee is designated), and/or by a change of Addressee.

(b) Intermediate element of Structure : the Transaction

[O + nR + (C)] + n [O + nR + (C)]

The end of a Transaction is signalled by a change of Speaker.

(c) Maximal element of structure : the Interaction

$$\left\{ [O + nR + (C)] + n [O + nR + (C)] \left\{ + n \right\} [O + nR + (C)] + n [O + nR + (C)] \right\}$$

The end of an interaction is signalled by Termination or by a change of Director.

Above this, we would be dealing with situationally defined *events* [1].

II. - PEDAGOGICAL APPLICATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Consider the following passage : it is an extract from a transcription of a language class given by a native speaker of American English to a group of four adult learners :

* Brackets indicate that an element is optional.

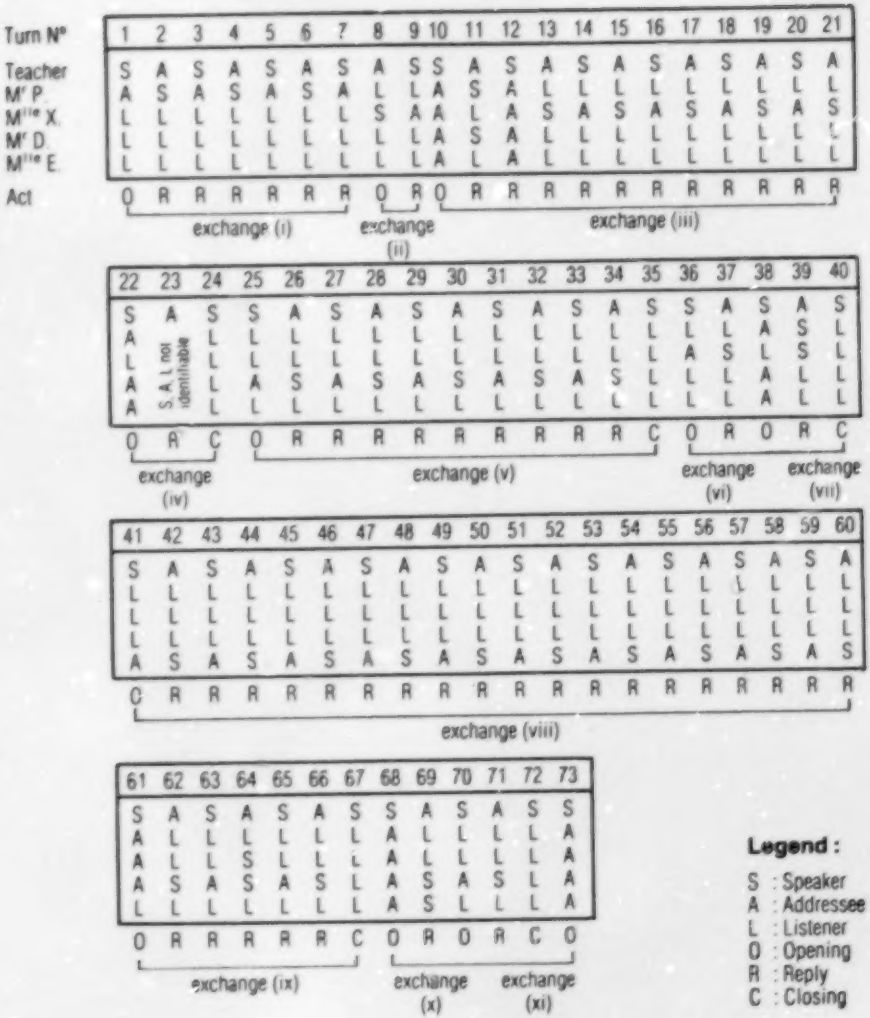
[1] This model is described in greater detail in Gremmo, Holec and Riley (forthcoming) « Prolégomènes à une description de la structure des échanges communicatifs directs », paper read at V[e] congrès international de linguistique appliquée, Montréal, Canada.

Turn N°	Participant	
1.	Teacher	er Mr. P. er what's the man doing... he's sitting but what's he doing with his hand
2.	Mr. P.	She's pointing their hand
3.	Teacher	Pardon
4.	Mr. P.	He is pointing his hand
5.	Teacher	OK he's poining his hand and what
6.	Mr. P.	and he is showing the seat in front of him
7.	Teacher	OK he's pointing his hand and what
8.	Melle X	the menu... the menu
9.	Teacher	The menu or (gesture) look at the picture look at the picture... he's pointing at his watch why is he pointing at his watch
10.		
11.	Mr. P.)	Because she's late
	Mr. D. (?))	She's she's late
12.	Teacher	OK the girl is late and perhaps (gesture) he's been... what (drums hands on desk imitating impatience) he's been...
13.	Melle X	Wait wait...
14.	Teacher	Waiting
15.	Melle X	He has waited
16.	Teacher	He's been waiting
17.	Melle X	waiting many many times
18.	Teacher	Many times (French gesture for doubt) many times
19.	Melle X	Some times...
20.	Teacher	Some times (gesture)
21.	Melle X	No
22.	Teacher	No he's been waiting for (gesture) for a (gesture — " fisherman's tale " = long)
23.	?	A lot of time
	?	A long time
24.	Teacher	A long time he's been waiting for a long time
25.	Teacher	er let's look at the text and er Mr. D. will you read the text please the text on the next page
26.	Mr. D.	Julia had a date a date with her new boyfriend in this restaurant at 8. He came on time but she she did not. She came in only a moment ago. It is 9. " Have you been waiting long ? " she asked him when she came in

27.	Teacher	She what
28.	Mr. D.	when she came in
29.	Teacher	She asked him she asked him
30.	Mr. D.	She asked him she asked him when she came in. " Yes I have ", he is saying : he is rather angry
31.	Teacher	Rather he's he's what he's rather angry he's rather angry (writes on blackboard).
32.	Mr. D.	Because he has been waiting for an hour
33.	Teacher	An hour
34.	Mr. D.	an hour
35.	Teacher	Yes for an hour
36.	Teacher	Yes what time is it now on the picture
37.	Melle X	It's nine o'clock
38.	Teacher	Yes it's nine o'clock... and when did this er man arrive when did he arrive in the restaurant when did he get to the
39.	Mr. P Melle X (?)	He arrived at 8 at eight...
40.	Teacher	8 o'clock OK. (writes on blackboard)
41.	Teacher	Miss E., can you ask a question with how long
42.	Melle E.	How long ago
43.	Teacher	How long and the man
44.	Melle E.	How long ago did he arrived
45.	Teacher	Mmm be careful
46.	Melle E.	No how long did he
47.	Teacher	Er ask me a question with how long has
48.	Melle E.	How long has he arrived
49.	Teacher	What happened at 8 o'clock at 8 o'clock what happened
50.	Melle E.	He arrived at 8 o'clock
51.	Teacher	OK he arrived huh and what's he doing right now
52.	Melle E.	Now he waits
53.	Teacher	Now he's
54.	Melle E.	Now he's waiting
55.	Teacher	Now he's waiting
56.	Melle E.	How long has he wait he wait... wait

57.	Teacher	How long has he waited or when did he start waiting when did he begin waiting when did he begin waiting when did he start waiting
58.	Melle E.	At 8 o'clock
59.	Teacher	At 8 o'clock OK at 8 o'clock he was waiting and now he's waiting and that that's been continuing huh so how long has he has has he what what can we put here (gesture indicating sentence on blackboard)
60.	Melle E.	In the restaurant in this restaurant
61.	Teacher	I wanted you to I want you to change something with this with wait OK at 8 o'clock he was waiting now he is waiting how long has he (whistle to indicate blank that they have to fill in) look at the text look back at the text look back at the text look at Julia's question
62.	Mr. D.	What exactly is that question
63.	Teacher	No look at her question Mr. D. Look at the question what is the what is the question
64.	Melle X Mr. D.	She asks when he came
65.	Teacher	No no look at the text not not the question look at the question
66.	Mr. D.	Have you been waiting long ?
67.	Teacher	Yeah have you been waiting long ?..
68.	Teacher	Mmm OK now this question is very similar you can change this question so that it's it's looks like
69.	Mr. D. Melle E.	How long has... waiting long Has be been... wait
70.	Teacher	How long has be been
71.	Mr. D.	Waiting
72.	Teacher	Waiting do you see that he started waiting at 8 o'clock he's still waiting now and he's he's been waiting for an hour he started an hour ago and it's continuing he has been waiting for an hour
73.	Teacher	Let's go on cover your texts again...

If we apply our system of analysis to this passage we obtain the following description :


Turn N°
Teacher
M^r P.
M^lle X.
M^r D.
M^lle E.
Act
exchange (i)
exchange (ii)
exchange (iii)
S, A, L not identifiable
exchange (iv)
exchange (v)
exchange (vi)
exchange (vii)
exchange (viii)
exchange (ix)
exchange (x)
exchange (xi)
Legend :
S : Speaker
A : Addressee
L : Listener
O : Opening
R : Reply
C : Closing

DISCUSSION

Not all teaching is an aid to learning : much of what the average language teacher does during his classes is based on the idea that everything he teaches will be learnt, provided it is taught properly. Yet, when we analyse classroom discourse, it becomes clear that the very presence and participation of the teacher distorts the interaction to such an extent that it no longer provides even the basic raw materials from which a learner can construct his competence. To a great extent, this is due to the high degree of control which is exercised by the teacher in this kind of teaching situation.

We have described elsewhere (Gremmo, Holec, Riley, 1977) the way in which discourse control is manifested in terms of

(i) address : the teacher selects who will speak next and,

(ii) types of illocutionary act : only the teacher corrects, orders, requests information and so on.

All this is clearly exemplified here, as it would be in any similar extract ; at no point did the teacher ever lose control of the discourse. For many teachers and teacher-trainers, far from being a criticism, such an observation would be a compliment to this teacher's level of competence : but if we examine such interaction carefully, we can see that amongst other things, it effectively prevents the practice and acquisition by the learner of one of the most essential aspects of interactive behaviour : taking the Initiative.

It was pointed out above that the performance of an Opening turn (O) requires a participant to use his Initiative to nominate himself as Speaker, to " Speak without being spoken to ", i.e. when not Addressed by another participant. To put it the other way round, any speaker who only learned that part of a language which involves Replying, who was not capable of Initiation, would clearly be inadequately equipped for the vast majority of interactions in which he was likely to participate. With the possible exception of cross-examinations in court, are there any interactive situations in which certain participants do not have the right to initiate ?

That the capacity to Initiate an exchange, to produce an O, is essential to any speaker in a wide range of situations is so obvious that we would not need to labour the point were it not for the fact that the acquisition of this capacity is almost entirely neglected, where it is not actually prevented, by language teaching of the sort we have been analysing. Teaching stifles Initiative.

What the teacher was trying to do here was to elicit samples of performance in the target language and to correct them. He clearly and typically regards these two activities as his responsibility, part of his role as teacher. Eliciting is generally realised by interrogatives, including a very high number of wh-questions, (e.g. turns 1, 5, 9...) gestural ones (e.g. turns 12, 20), imperatives (e.g. turns 9, 47), etc. Correcting is carried out either by direct modelling (e.g. turns 33, 34 - this is particularly true for pronunciation corrections), or by indirect modeling (an utterance is not accepted, usually with some information as to why it is regarded as unsatisfactory e.g. turns 18-24).

A common procedure in this type of interaction is for the Teacher to throw open the discourse by using general Address, then to select one of the participants who reply for a dyadic exchange (e.g. exchange iii). Should this exchange fail to reach the conclusion desired by the teacher (e.g. the right answer, cf. exchange iv) even after extremely prolonged negotiation (e.g. exchange viii) the teacher feels quite free to initiate a new exchange. Generally, he does this by throwing the floor open, using general Address from which only his previous Addressee is excluded, by implication, that Addressee having failed to provide the required answer or behaviour.

This being the case, it is not surprising to note that the Teacher has a higher number of Turns than all the learners put together : 40 out of 73 of the Turns in this passage belonged to the Teacher, the remainder being shared inequally amongst the four learners. That this overwhelming proportion of teacher-talk is accompanied by a corresponding proportion of teacher-turns is logical enough, but as it has extremely important repercussions on the nature of the discourse, it is well worth considering in more detail.

The Turns are organised into exchanges. The teacher participates in every single exchange, and so there are no learner-learner exchanges. But most significant of all, it is the teacher who Initiates the vast majority of the exchanges — ten of the eleven, to be exact. The one exchange initiated by a learner is an Interruption : in turn 8, Melle X spoke even though the Teacher had addressed Mr. P.[2]. This gives rise to a minimal O/R exchange, with the Teacher replying then keeping the floor to perform an O with general Address in turn 10.

All this is an indication of the highly privileged role the Teacher has in terms of alternation. Let the reader try to imagine any other participant behaving in this way ; indeed, try to imagine any participant in almost any other type of interaction behaving thus and it will quickly become apparent that this teaching

[2] In fact, even this O was probably a mistake : Mlle X was looking down at her book and seemed to think she was the teacher's Addressee. But the figures speak for themselves without needing any speculative reinforcement.

interaction is of a highly idiosyncratic type. This is because the socio-linguistic rules governing alternation which are applied here by *all* the participants are not those of most other types of interaction.

We have here a type of interaction where a participant has the right, conferred by his role, to :

(i) participate in all exchanges
(ii) initiate the vast majority of exchanges
(iii) decide the length of any exchange
(iv) close exchanges
(v) include and exclude other participants in exchanges
(vi) open all adjacency pairs (e.g. wh- question and reply) : this is largely a logical consequence of (ii)
(vii) be the only possible Addressee of any exchange initiated by another participant
(viii) decide on the order of other participants' turns
(ix) decide on the number of turns attributed to each participant.

All of this adds up to a highly characteristic and even idiosyncratic form of alternation : the way in which the discourse is shared and the overall balance of power, the interpersonal dynamics, all combine to produce an interactive structure *sui generis*.

The pedagogical implications of this analysis are simple but far-reaching : since learners in this situation never have the opportunity to take the initiative (perform Os), they will probably have considerable difficulty in doing so in a real-life situation. Being 'tongue-tied' in this way has little to do with vocabulary or grammar, since it is due to lack of training in an interactive skill, not to an inability to manipulate the verbal structures of the language. The importance of this interactive skill cannot be overemphasised, since unless it is employed, any interaction, even one first initiated by a person other than the learner e.g. a native speaker of English, will soon come to a halt. There are, for example, socio-cultural rules governing the alternation in interactions between two strangers meeting for the first time : one of these is that the number of Os a given participant is allowed to perform before the other performs one is very limited. The first participant does not have the right to interrogate : if the second participant does not take the Initiative quite early it will be understood that he does not wish the interaction to continue.

It is often argued that text-book materials such as dialogues will compensate for the limited nature of classroom interaction, by exposing the learner to

'normal' interaction. Even if we set aside a number of objections based on the learning process, though, a brief examination of such texts shows that they are invariably distorted from the interactional point of view, usually for the purpose of giving prominence to some syntactic teaching point — a valid enough aim in itself, but not conducive to the acquisition of interactive skills. Here is a typical example :

" William : What are *you* doing this weekend, Peter ?
Peter : We're probably going to see Anne's people.
William : Oh, yes ? How are they getting on ?
Peter : They're very well. They're going on their holidays next week.
William : Where are they going ?
Peter : They're going to Spain.
William : Madrid ?
Peter : Yes, they're going to Madrid *first*, I think.
William : Are they going to Barcelona ?
Peter : Yes, they're going there too, I think.
William : When are they leaving ?
Peter : Next Thursday.
William : How long are they going to be in Spain ?
Peter : About twelve days.
William : Are they flying ?
Peter : No. They're going by car.
William : I suppose Robert'll do some of the driving.
Peter : Yes. Thank God *I* shan't be in the car ! "

Even when didactic materials are based not on a structural but on a functional progression, the same objections hold *mutatis mutandis*. A dialogue consisting of participant A's putting a long series of " requests for information " to participant B, without B ever taking the initiative, is just as distorted from the interactive point of view as is the passage quoted.

The problem is not an insuperable one, and we would like to finish by suggesting a number of approaches, all of which have been tried and tested, which we find helpful in the acquisition of interactive skills. We will discuss them in order of increasing importance.

1. Text-book dialogues etc., do not need to remain one-sided. Taking the example of the first contact with a native speaker, the learner can easily be shown now to take the initiative by using such devices as " And you ? ", " How about you ? " tags, gestures, as well as more obvious and elaborate strategies such as the use of adjacency pairs or exclamations.

2. The use of authentic materials, especially for comprehension. Since we are still ignorant of the rules governing Alternation (and, indeed, of most other types of discourse rule) the only sure way of exposing the learner to undistorted interaction is by providing him with suitable authentic materials.

3. By changing the role of the teacher.

It is vital to remember that the kind of classroom interaction we have been studying is the product of a social or pedagogical *choice*. It is not the result of some rigid and unchangeable law of nature : it is the result of the unconscious application by both teacher and learners of a set of socio-cultural rules governing how they should behave. Both parties accept certain roles which, as we have seen, imply certain interactive privileges and responsibilities. The rationale for all this is, ultimately, a series of informal pedagogical principles, however fuzzy and ill-defined.

As such, it can be changed. A considerable movement towards autonomous or self-directed learning is already under way (cf. Holec, forthcoming) and there is an increasing interest in learner-centred approaches in the classroom. More and more often, teachers are asking themselves not how can I improve the quality of my teaching, but how can I help my learners learn ? On investigation, the teacher finds that many of what have long been regarded as his responsibilities can easily and profitably be handed over to adult learners (e.g. most management decisions) or are irrelevant (even the sacrosanct idea that correcting results in improvement turns out to be very shaky !) or are an actual obstacle to learning, as is the case with the acquisition of interactive skills such as taking the Initiative. But handing over the initiative to the learner is a step many teachers are unwilling to take, since they see it, quite rightly, as a challenge to their traditional role.

In practical terms, though, what might seem to be revolutionary moves can be carried out with remarkably little fuss. The teacher who sets his group some form of pairs-practice, or who prepares a simulation exercise and then sits on the touchline, or who encourages in any way communication between the learners themselves whilst personally withdrawing from that interaction, has taken an important step towards allowing his learners to take the Initiative : he has stopped interfering.

The obvious objection here is that it means the blind leading the blind. But as we have seen, in their intuitive understanding of interactive structure, the learners are no more or less blind than the teacher, so that even if their simulations, dialogues and so on are not perfect, at least they are unlikely to be as distorted as the type of classroom discourse we have been studying.

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